



# Residential Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Residential Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) affords property owners in King County jurisdiction to be able to add a separate dwelling unit on their site that can utilize the same tax parcel without having to subdivide or apply for a conditional use permit. Nationwide, ADU's are also commonly referred to as mother-in-law, backyard cottage homes, granny pads and secondary suites to name a few.

**Apply On-Line at [MyBuildingPermit.com](https://www.mybuildingpermit.com)**  
**Select:** King County | Building | Single  
Family Residential | Accessory Dwelling Unit



King County recognizes the need for a wide range of housing options in the community, and in many cases most properties will be able to support an ADU based on the flexibility of King County Zoning Code (refer to the Quick Reference Table, page 3). The ADU may be detached, wholly contained within a basement or attic, or attached to the primary single-family residence. The ADU functions similar to a single-family residence, but is limited in heated floor area of one thousand square feet, unless the property owner purchases a Transferable Development Right (TDR) to increase the heated floor area up to a maximum of one thousand five hundred square feet in a RA zoning classification.

An ADU typically contains a kitchen, living area, and separate entrance. The ADU may function as an independent dwelling space on the same tax parcel which is often used for long term rentals or family members. Please review the applicable King County Code below, which defines an ADU and all of the associated zoning provisions, governed under [KCC Title 21A](#), as follows:

**KCC 21A.06.350 Dwelling unit, accessory;** a separate, complete dwelling unit attached to or contained within the structure of the primary dwelling; or contained within a separate structure that is accessory to the primary dwelling unit on the premises. (Ord. 10870 § 110, 1993).

General provisions, per KCC Title 21A.08.030 B.7.a.:

1. Only one ADU is allowed per primary single detached dwelling unit AND the primary dwelling unit or the accessory dwelling unit shall be owner occupied.
2. ADU must be in the same building or attached to the primary dwelling unit:
  - a. Urban lots (UR & R1-48) less than five thousand square feet in area; and
  - b. Rural lots less than the minimum lot size; or on a
  - c. Lot containing more than one primary dwelling.
3. ADU may be detached from the primary dwelling unit:
  - a. Urban lots (UR & R-I—R-48) that are greater than five thousand square feet; or

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- b. Rural lots (A & RA) that meet the minimum lot size of the zone “minimum lot size in zones RA- 2.5 is 1.875 acres; RA-5 is 3.75 acres; RA-10 is 7.5 acres; and RA-20 is 15 acres;”
  - c. If one Transferable Development Right is purchased from the rural area under K.C.C. chapter 21A.37, a detached accessory dwelling unit is allowed on an RA-5 zoned lot that is at least two and one-half acres and less than three and three-quarters acres.
4. One of the dwelling units shall not exceed heated floor area of 1,000 square feet except when:
  - a. One of the dwelling units is wholly contained within a basement or attic; or
  - b. On a site zoned RA;
5. If one Transferable Development Right is purchased from the rural area under K.C.C. chapter 21A.37, the smaller of the dwelling units is permitted a maximum floor area up to one thousand five hundred square feet.
6. When the primary and accessory dwelling units are located in the same building, only one entrance may be located on each street side of the building.
7. One additional off-street parking space shall be provided.
8. The accessory dwelling unit shall be converted to another permitted use or shall be removed if one of the dwelling units ceases to be owner occupied.
9. An applicant seeking to build an accessory dwelling unit shall file an [Accessory Dwelling Units: Notice on Title Requirements and Affidavit](#) with the Department of Executive Services, Records and Licensing Services Division, that identifies the dwelling unit as accessory. The notice shall run with the land. The applicant shall submit proof that the notice was filed before Permitting will approve any permit for the construction of the accessory dwelling unit. If an accessory dwelling unit in a detached building in the rural zone is subsequently converted to a primary unit on a separate lot, neither the original lot nor the new lot may have an additional detached accessory dwelling unit constructed unless the lot is at least twice the minimum lot area required in the zone.
10. Accessory dwelling units and accessory living quarters are not allowed in the F zone.

### Permits

The construction of an ADU home is the same as for any residential structure and requires a building and other related permits. A separate [On-Site Sewage System \(OSS\)](#) review and/or permit may be required for an ADU.

### Addition Information or Questions

- Call the Permit Center at 206-296-6600 - your message will be returned within 24 to 48 hours.
- Email [DPERWebInquiries@KingCounty.gov](mailto:DPERWebInquiries@KingCounty.gov)
- [Permit Center hours and location](#)

# Residential Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), continued

## Quick Reference Table

Urban Growth Area (UR & R-1 – R-48)	Rural Area (RA-2.5, RA-5, RA-10,& RA-20)
Lot less than 5,000 SF: shall be attached to the single-family residence (with a continuous roofline) or wholly contained within a basement or attic	Lot less than minimum lot size: shall be attached to the single-family residence (with a continuous roofline) or wholly contained within a basement or attic
Note: For a detached ADU, If lot does not meet minimum lot size in a RA-5 zoning classification, a <a href="#">Transfer of Development Rights</a> (TDR) credit may be purchased from a Rural Area or Natural Resource Lands for a parcel that is at least two and one-half acres and less than three and three-quarters acres	
Lot greater than 5,000 SF: may be detached	<p>Lots that meet minimum lot size: may be detached</p> <p>Min lot size in RA &amp; A zones are as follows:</p> <p>RA-2.5: min. lot size = 1.875 acres RA-5: min. lot size = 3.75 acres RA-10: min. lot size = 7.5 acres RA-20: min. lot size = 15 acres A-10: min. lot size = 10 acres A-35: min. lot size = 35 acres</p>
Maximum floor area in the urban growth area is 1,000 square feet, accept when the ADU is wholly contained in the basement or attic	Lot zoned RA, the smaller of the dwelling units is permitted a maximum floor area up to one thousand five hundred square feet through the purchase of TDR credit at: <a href="#">Transfer of Development Rights</a>

## Additional Resources

King County [Department of Local Services, Permitting Division](#)

- [Property Research Guide](#) and [Property Research and Maps](#)
- [Residential, New Single Family Construction Packet](#)
- [Permit Fees](#)
- [Accessory Dwelling Units: Notice on Title Requirements and Affidavit](#)
- [Tiny Homes](#)

[King County Code](#)